

# Student-Led Conferences: Fostering Accountability Through Self-Assessment

**Special Area:** Administration

**Written by:** (Barbara Fidler and Jason Krieger, Central Junior High, Euless, TX)

## **I. ABSTRACT**

Educational and business institutions are increasingly looking towards self-assessment as a method of evaluation and motivation leading to self-improvement. Having students conduct their own conferences (with teachers and/or parents) fosters a sense of ownership of their learning. By evaluating their strongest and weakest samples of work, rating their study skills and character traits, and setting goals for improvement, students not only gain a clearer sense of their academic progress, but open the door for improved mature dialogue with educators and parents.

## **II. OVERVIEW**

- A. Content can be applied to any and all units.
- B. Monitoring Progress: Assessment & Evaluation

## **III. RESOURCES**

- A. Cromwell, S. "Student-Led Conferences: A Growing Trend" Education World [On-line]. Available URL: [http://www.education-world.com/a\\_admin/admin112.shtml](http://www.education-world.com/a_admin/admin112.shtml), 2002
- B. Hackmann, Donald G. "Student-Led Conferences at the Middle Level" ERIC Digest. [On-line]. Available URL: [http://www.ericfacility.net/databases/ERIC\\_Digests/ed407171.html](http://www.ericfacility.net/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed407171.html), 1997

## **IV. PRESENTATION OUTLINE**

- A. Benefits
  - 1. Brings parents to school
  - 2. Helps teach organizational skills to students
  - 3. Allows students to practice making formal presentations using proper social etiquette
  - 4. Builds self-esteem and oral communication skills
  - 5. Tells parent more than report cards
  - 6. Opens dialogue between parents and students about strengths and weaknesses
  - 7. Teaches students how to set goals
- B. Overview of Student-Led Conference
  - 1. Students select examples of strong and weak work
  - 2. Students analyze their study skills and character traits
  - 3. Students set goals for academic progress.
  - 4. Students present findings to parents/teachers
- C. Planning stages for teachers and administrators
  - 1. Divide students up and assign teachers
  - 2. Create folders for students
  - 3. Meet with teachers and hand out folders
- D. How to introduce idea to students
  - 1. Pull-out Meetings
  - 2. Show students forms and folders
  - 3. Show students video of past conferences
- E. Setting up the actual conferences
  - 1. Setting up appointments
  - 2. Setting a place with stations

3. Supplying refreshments
- F. What the conference looks like
  1. Conference agenda
  2. Conference video/demonstration
- G. Evaluation and Follow-Up
  1. Parent, Teacher, and Student Evaluations
  2. Follow-up Conferences to check goal progress

**V. HANDOUTS**

- A. Checklist for Students (Appendix A)
- B. How I See Myself form (Appendix B)
- C. Portfolio in Action Check Sheet (Appendix C)
- D. Student Action Form (Appendix D)
- E. Parent Notification Letter (Appendix E)
- F. Conference Scheduling Letter (Appendix F)
- G. Student-Led Conference Agenda (Appendix G)
- H. Student Evaluation (Appendix H)
- I. Faculty Evaluation (Appendix I)
- J. Parent Evaluation (Appendix J)
- K. Sample Comments from Students, Teachers, and Parents (Appendix K)
- L. Frequently Asked Questions from Students (Appendix L)
- M. Frequently Asked Questions from Teachers (Appendix M)
- N. Frequently Asked Questions from Parents (Appendix N)
- O. Student-Led Conference Reminder Slips (Appendix O)

**VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- A. Bonnett, T. & Marcellus A. "Student-Led Parent Conferences" *Idaho Middle Level Association* [On-line]. Available URL: <http://www.idahomiddlelevel.org/studentled%20conf.htm>, 2001
- B. The Mid-Point of a School Year-Report Cards & Conferences: Another Barrier or a Challenging Opportunity. *UCLA School Mental Health Project Center for Mental Health in School* [On-line]. Available URL: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/atyourschool/feb03.htm> , 2003

## Appendix A

### CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS FOR STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES

1. By Dec. 1st, complete the Portfolio In Action Worksheet. This requires that you select 2 items from each Academic area. One item should demonstrate your strengths in that subject, and the other should show areas needed for improvement. These might be tests, quizzes, homework assignments, projects, etc. You will need to have each academic teacher initial the Portfolio in Action Worksheet to approve your selection. Turn this in by Dec. 1st to your assigned teacher.
2. Complete the How I See Myself Form by Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>. This is a self-assessment that will be reviewed at the Conference.
3. Complete the Student Action Form by Jan. 15<sup>th</sup>. This form requires that you set 1 goal for yourself for each Academic area. This is what you believe that you can achieve in this class by mid-May. This goal should be based upon the areas in this class that you need improvement. It might be about neatness of work, or an improved grade in the class, or work turned in on time, etc. Goals should be **specific, attainable, and measurable**.  
You will also include a statement that says “I know if I reach this goal when...” Complete the sentence that best suits your goal. For example, if your goal was to improve your overall grade in this class by 5 points, then you would say “I know if I reach this goal when my final grade in this class goes from 85 to 90.” If your goal was to improve the neatness of your work turned in, then you might say “I know if I reach this goal when my I show my parents my work , ask them to rate my neatness, and I am told at least 3 times that my neatness is improving”
4. Complete a course on etiquette and how to conduct a conference. This will be done at school.
5. Be familiar with the agenda of the conference and plan a rehearsal time for the conference. You will practice meeting your parents at the door, taking them to the conference site, offering refreshments, passing out the agenda, conducting the meeting in the time frame allowed, asking for questions, and thanking your parents for coming.
6. Complete a written thank-you note to your parents for attending conference.

#### Timeline

Dec. 1st – Portfolio in Action Worksheet completed and turned in.

Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>- How I See Myself Form completed and turned in.

Jan. 15<sup>th</sup> – Student Action Form completed and turned in.

Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>– Receive all of the above and plan rehearsal of conference

Jan. 24-26<sup>th</sup> – Conduct student-led conference.

1 week after conference – complete Thank-you note to parents.

May 15 – Goal Completion Checklist – complete, have parents initial and turn in.

## Appendix B

### HOW I SEE MYSELF

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Put a checkmark under **1** for NEVER, **2** for SELDOM, **3** for FREQUENTLY, **4** for ALWAYS

<b>Quality Producer</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
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I work successfully as a team member	___	___	___	___
I produce quality projects and assignments	___	___	___	___
I use materials effectively and appropriately.	___	___	___	___
I met due dates/deadlines.	___	___	___	___
I go above and beyond.	___	___	___	___

<b>Effective Communicator</b>				
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I effectively communicate thoughts and ideas.	___	___	___	___
I make positive contributions to lessons/discussions	___	___	___	___
I deal with problems and arguments in a positive way.	___	___	___	___

<b>Life-Long Learner</b>				
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I know who to ask for help and information.	___	___	___	___
I know how to find and use a variety of resources.	___	___	___	___
I am flexible and creative when necessary.	___	___	___	___

<b>Responsible Citizen</b>				
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I demonstrate personal responsibility for attitude, actions, words, and work.	___	___	___	___
I follow rules and directions.	___	___	___	___
I make a positive contribution to the classroom and community.	___	___	___	___
I demonstrate respect and understanding for myself and others.	___	___	___	___

<b>Perceptive Thinker</b>				
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I demonstrate knowledge and interest in the world and current events.	___	___	___	___
I use knowledge and creativity to solve problems.	___	___	___	___
I think beyond the obvious.	___	___	___	___

<b>Self-Directed Individual</b>				
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I show maturity and responsibility by making healthy, safe and wise choices.	___	___	___	___
I set goals and follow through with them.	___	___	___	___
I start work, stay on task and complete the assignment without being reminded or prompted.	___	___	___	___

## Appendix C

### PORTFOLIO IN ACTION CHECK SHEET

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Area	Item Selected and Description	S/W	CK Unit	Why I Selected It	Tchr Initials
US History	Checks and Balances Test	W	Constitution	I didn't plan enough study time.	
US History	Personal Bill of Rights Project	S	Constitution	I put a lot of time and effort into this and it shows!	

## Appendix D

## STUDENT ACTION FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

I believe that my strengths as a student are \_\_\_\_\_

I believe that in order to be a better student that I need to \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Goals need to be **specific, realistic, and measurable**.

[illegible]

## Appendix E

November 29, 2004

Dear Parent/Guardian,

During mid-January 2005, 8<sup>th</sup> grade Central Junior High students will be holding Student-Led Conferences. These conferences will provide an opportunity for your students to reflect upon their successes during the year and to provide you with examples of what they have learned in each of the academic areas. Students will be focusing on material from Core Knowledge Units. We emphasize that these are Student-Led Conferences and a teacher will be attending as an observer, but not as an active participant.

The students will be responsible for scheduling these conferences during 2-3 days (day and evening times will be available) arranging for room set-up and refreshments, preparing formal invitations, and conducting the meetings. We view this as an extremely positive opportunity for these students to emphasize their strengths, acknowledge their weaknesses, and, with you in attendance, set a goal to reach by the end of the academic year. Please make every effort to be part of this conference. This is an opportunity to open up lines of communication with your students about their education. We strongly encourage you to be a positive part of this conferencing process.

While specific dates and times are not yet established, it would assist us greatly if you could acknowledge your willingness and availability for this unique process. Please return the bottom portion of this letter as soon as possible to help us in our planning process. You may mail it to the school to the attention of Barbara Fidler or your student may return it to her mailbox in the office.

Sincerely,

Central Junior High Campus Planning Committee

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Please check appropriate response.

☐ Yes I am interested and willing to attend the Student-Led Conference.

☐ No, I am unable to attend the Student-Led Conference.

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Student's First and Last Name

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phone number

---

Parent/Guardian Printed Name

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Parent/Guardian Signature

## Appendix F

### Scheduling Letter

Students-Please take this notice home to your parents so they can read the information at the bottom. By now you should have shown your teacher your Portfolio in Action Worksheet, Work Evaluation form, How I See Myself Form and Student Action Form. If you have not shown any of these to your supervising teacher, please do so immediately.

On January 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, and 26<sup>th</sup>, we will conduct the student-led conferences. If your parents indicated that they will not be able to attend, a counselor or administrator will attend with you. If your parents can attend, they will choose a time below and call the school for an appointment. If a parent does not call by January 12<sup>th</sup> to schedule a conference, you will be assigned a time. Remember, the conferences are not optional, they are required. During the 5<sup>th</sup> six weeks you will be given two 100's in each of your core classes for conducting a successful conference. In May we will ask you to evaluate the process and see if you think you met your goals for improvement. Thank you for your participation in this exciting program. We are looking forward to the conferences.

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Parents/guardians: Please call 817-354-3350, extension 3370 (Mrs. McIntosh) to schedule a time for your conference. We will hold up to six conferences during each time slot—first come—first serve basis. Please call ASAP, but before January 12<sup>th</sup>. Thank you so much for your participation. These time slots are available on Monday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, and Wednesday, January 26<sup>th</sup>.

3:30-3:50  
3:50-4:10  
4:10-4:30  
4:30-4:50  
4:50-5:10  
5:10-5:30

6:30-6:50  
6:50-7:10  
7:10-7:30  
7:30-7:50  
7:50-8:10  
8:10-8:30

If you have any questions, you may call Mrs. Fidler at 817-354-3350, extension 3373.



## **Appendix G**

### **Student-Led Conference Agenda**

1. Meet and greet parents/guardians, escort them to their station, introduce them to observing teacher, hold chairs out for parents. (About 1 minute.)
2. Offer refreshments to parents, serve refreshments if desired. (About 2 minutes.)
3. Explain to parents what the conference will entail and ask that they hold any questions until the end of the conference. (About 1 minute.)
4. Present and discuss the portfolio work collected. (About 8 minutes.)
5. Present and discuss the “How I See Myself” evaluation form. (About 2 minutes.)
6. Present and discuss “Student Action Form” goals. (About 2 minutes.)
7. Ask parents/guardians if they have any questions. (About 1-2 minutes.)
8. Parents, students, and observing teachers fill out evaluation forms. (About 2 minutes.)
9. Students thanks parents/guardians for attending, show them to door. (About 1 minute.)

## **Appendix H**

### **Student Evaluation**

**Thank you for participating. Please answer these questions to help us evaluate the program.**

- 1. What is one benefit you can see in conducting a student-led conference?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. Did you discuss work/projects that you have never shown to your parents before this meeting? If so, what?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3. Did your mentor teacher assist you in preparing for the conference?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4. What was the most difficult part of the student-led-conference process for you?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5. What suggestions do you have to improve the conferences next year?**

## Appendix I

### Faculty Evaluation

Name of student\_\_\_\_\_

**1. Who attended with the student?**

\_\_\_\_\_ One parent/guardian

\_\_\_\_\_ Two parents/guardians

\_\_\_\_\_ School personnel

**2. Did the student seem prepared for the conference? If not, discuss areas for improvement.**

**3. Did the student introduce you in a courteous manner and offer refreshments?**

**4. Did the student discuss the work portfolio, How I See Myself, and goals? If not, what did the student leave out?**

**5. Would you recommend full credit for the presentation? If not, what grade would you suggest?**

Signature of monitor\_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix J**

### **Parent Evaluation**

**Thank you for attending. Please answer these questions to help us evaluate the program.**

- 1. How was the student-led-conference beneficial to you?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. What is something new you learned about your child at the conference?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3. What did you learn about your student's academic progress/work?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4. When we do the conferences next year, do you have any suggestions for improvement?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5. Other than attending games, concerts and other programs, and the beginning of school open house/PTA meeting, is this the first time this year you have actually been in the school building to discuss your student's work and/or academic progress?**

\_\_\_\_\_yes

\_\_\_\_\_no

## Appendix K

### Sample Comments From Students, Teachers and Parents

- This helped me see what she is doing other than just seeing a report card.
- It made my daughter articulate her strengths and weaknesses. I think that it let me know how well she really knew herself.
- It is a stepping stone that will get us ready for interviews.
- It helps for the future in learning to speak with adults.
- It showed both Kevin and myself where he has been and how much he has improved. Most of all, it helps Kevin strive to improve in areas that he may not have focused on before. Presentation is a vital tool in life.
- My teenage daughter actually wanted to share info with me!
- It let me see what goals my son set for himself and how he has improved in his classes.
- I believe that this conference helped me to become honest with my parents about my work ethics.
- It gave me a better insight into my daughter's capabilities, showed that she is becoming a responsible adult, as well as how she views herself.
- I appreciated the opportunity to see my child explain her work, whether it was good or bad, in a confident manner in the school setting.
- It was an interesting position to watch your student struggle to explain themselves—always an opportunity to grow in understanding.
- I actually got to explain my grades to my parents without interruption.
- It helped me understand how Matt sees himself --- as a very confident person.
- It helped me let my parents know that I am trying and let them see my conference skills.
- I thought it was beneficial to me mainly from the standpoint that I got to see Zach in a different environment and how he presented himself to a small audience. It will help him to develop public speaking and presentation skills.
- It let me know my child's thought processes regarding self, school work, and surroundings are perceived.

- **It was good to see that my daughter set high academic goals this year.**
- **The benefit I see is seeing my son overcoming a “nervous” voice to be a competent communicator.**

## Appendix L

### Frequently Asked Questions From Students

**1. What's in it for me?**

Students will receive two grades of one-hundred in each of the four core subjects after successful completion of a student-led conference. (Of course, schools can choose to grade conferences or not to present conferences for a grade)

**2. What if my parents don't speak English?**

Students can conduct the conference in their native language. After the conference, the monitoring teacher might ask you to give a brief summary in English. The importance of the conference is for your parents to understand your assessment, so please use the language best suited for that purpose.

**3. What if my parents can't come?**

Several afternoons and nights will be available for the conferences. However, if your parents call the school or indicate in writing that they are unable to attend, you may choose a teacher, counselor, or administrator who knows you to participate in the conference with you. If you are unable to secure a participant, one of our administrators or counselors will be happy to join you in the conference.

**4. How do I dress for the conference?**

You may wear regular school clothes to the conference. You should adhere to the school dress code. Since the conference is a formal presentation, we would suggest that you dress nicely.

**5. How long does it last?**

The conference only lasts about twenty minutes. You do the majority of the talking and your parents can only ask questions at the end.

## **Appendix M**

### **Frequently Asked Questions From Teachers**

#### **1. What's in it for me?**

Teachers get to see the students' perspective on their work. It also really is a celebratory event. The first year we piloted the program, none of the teachers really wanted to do it. After the conferences, everyone was impressed and enthusiastic about doing it again.

#### **2. What do I do as an observing teacher?**

Probably one of the most difficult things for any teacher to do, don't talk. Just listen. It's alright to redirect the conversation if a parent starts asking questions about individual assignments. Gently remind them that they can ask questions at the end.

#### **3. What if a parent wants to stay and ask me more questions?**

Let the parent know that this is not the time for parent-teacher conferences, but that you would be glad to make an appointment with them for another time.

#### **4. Do I only observe students I have in class?**

No. Since your role is only that of observer, it is not necessary that you know the student. However, whenever possible, we assign students to be observed by one of their own classroom teachers. This seems to make them more comfortable.



## Appendix N

### Frequently Asked Questions From Parents

**1. Can I discuss my student's grade at the conference?**

The conference is not a time to discuss grades or work with the teachers. Your child will present several samples of work and may discuss overall success in each class. After the conference you may schedule a meeting with any of the teachers if you have any concerns.

**2. It is hard for me to take time off work. Will there be any evening appointments available?**

The conferences will be held after school and in the evenings. Special arrangements can be made to participate in a conference before school.

**3. Will I be able to ask questions about the work?**

Yes. At the end of the conference, you may ask about any of the assignments discussed. You might also wish to share similarities and differences with your views of the students' strengths and weaknesses.

**4. Do I need to bring anything to the conference?**

No. The students have gathered materials for the conference. Refreshments will be served. Just bring yourself and enjoy the conference!

**5. How long will the conference last?**

Each conference lasts about twenty minutes.

**6. Can I meet with all my student's teachers?**

This is really not a parent-teacher conference, the teachers are told to say as little as possible. We want the students to do the talking. If you have specific questions for specific teachers, you can always make an appointment or e-mail the teacher. Because not every teacher can be at every conference, it is possible that the observing teacher during your student's conference might not have your student in class.

## Appendix O

### Student-Led Conference Reminder Slips

**Don't forget! You need to be collecting work from each core class and/or each pre-AP or GT class for your student-led conference folder. Have you recently had a test or project on which you've done exceptionally well? Have you had a disappointment? Put it in your folder!**

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